

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A disposable undergarment comprising:

5 a front body panel comprising a pair of opposite first laterally spaced side edges, a first waist edge and a first crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said first waist edge;

10 a rear body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced second side edges, a second waist edge and a second crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said second waist edge, wherein said first and second crotch edges are longitudinally spaced from each other, and wherein at least one of said first and second crotch edges comprises at least one longitudinally extending slit formed therein; and

a crotch member connected to said front and rear body panels and covering said at least one slit.

15 2. The disposable undergarment of claim 1 wherein said front and rear body panels each comprise a body side surface and a garment side surface, and wherein said crotch member is connected to said garment side surface of each of said front and rear body panels.

20 3. The disposable undergarment of claim 1 wherein said crotch member comprises a top sheet, a back sheet and a retention portion disposed between said top sheet and said back sheet, wherein at least one of said top sheet and said back sheet comprises an elastic material.

25 4. The disposable undergarment of claim 1 wherein said first and second crotch edges comprise a first and second longitudinally extending slit formed therein respectively, wherein said crotch member covers said first and second slits.

5. The disposable undergarment of claim 1 wherein said crotch member comprises opposite sides and at least one fold formed along each of said opposite sides, wherein said at least one fold on said opposites sides are connected to at least one of said front and rear body panels on opposite sides of said slit.

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10 6. The disposable undergarment of claim 1 wherein said at least one of said front and rear body panels comprising said at least one slit comprises an elastic material and is expandable between at least a first and second condition, wherein a pair of edges defining said slit are substantially abutted when said at least one of said front and rear body panels comprising said elastic material are in said first condition, and wherein said pair of edges defining said slit are separated when said at least one of said front and rear body panels comprising said elastic material are in said second condition.

15 7. The disposable undergarment of claim 6 wherein said crotch member is connected to said at least one of said front and rear body panel comprising said at least one slit when said at least one of said front and rear body panel comprising said slit is in said second condition.

20 8. The disposable undergarment of claim 6 wherein said crotch member is connected to said at least one of said front and rear body panel comprising said at least one slit when said at least one of said front and rear body panel comprising said slit is in said first condition.

25 9. The disposable undergarment of claim 1 wherein said front body panel has a first length defined between said first waist edge and said first crotch edge, and wherein said rear body panel has a second length defined between said second waist edge and said second crotch edge, and wherein said slit has a third length, wherein said third length is between about 5% and about 75% of at least  
30 one of said first and second lengths.

10. The disposable undergarment of claim 9 wherein said third length is between about 10% and about 50% of said at least one of said first and second lengths.

5 11. The disposable undergarment of claim 10 wherein said third length is between about 15% and about 30% of said at least one of said first and second lengths.

10 12. The disposable undergarment of claim 1 wherein said crotch member is minimally attached to said front and rear body panel along a longitudinally extending centerline of said crotch member.

13. The disposable undergarment of claim 1 further comprising at least one fastener member connected to at least one of said front and rear body panels and releasably engaging the other of said front and rear body panels.

15 14. The disposable undergarment of claim 13 wherein said at least one fastener member comprises a pair of fastener members connected to said at least one of said front and rear body panels along one of said pair of opposite laterally spaced first and second side edges.

20 15. A method of manufacturing a disposable undergarment comprising:  
moving a web of body panel material in a longitudinal machine  
direction;  
forming a cross-machine direction slit in said web; and  
connecting a crotch member to said web, wherein said crotch  
member extends in said cross-machine direction and covers said slit.

25 16. The method of claim 15 wherein said web comprises opposite first and second longitudinal edges, and wherein said slit extends inwardly from one of said first and second longitudinal edges.

17. The method of claim 15 further comprising cutting said web along said longitudinal machine direction and thereby forming a front body panel web and a rear body panel web.

5 18. The method of claim 17 wherein said forming said cross-machine direction slit in said web comprises forming a pair of cross-machine direction slits in said front and rear body panel webs after said cutting said web along said longitudinal machine direction.

10 19. The method of claim 17 wherein said cutting said web comprises cutting said web through said slit after forming said cross-machine direction slit, wherein each of said front and rear body panel webs comprises a longitudinally extending cut edge and a cross-direction slit extending laterally from said longitudinally extending cut edge after said cutting said web.

15 20. The method of claim 17 wherein said cutting said web comprises forming first and second cut edges on said front and rear body panel webs respectively, wherein said first and second cut edges are substantially linear.

20 21. The method of claim 15 wherein said web has a body side surface and a garment side surface, and wherein said connecting said crotch member to said web comprises connecting said crotch member to said garment side surface of said web.

25 22. The method of claim 15 wherein said web has a body side surface and a garment side surface, and wherein said connecting said crotch member to said web comprises connecting said crotch member to said body side surface of said web.

23. The method of claim 15 comprising stretching said web in said longitudinal direction prior to said forming said cross-machine direction slit in said web.

5           24. The method of claim 17 wherein said forming said slit and cutting said web of body panel material along said longitudinal machine direction are done simultaneously with a single cutting device.

10           25. The method of claim 15 wherein said crotch member comprises a top sheet, a back sheet and a retention portion disposed between said top sheet and said back sheet.

          26. The method of claim 15 further comprising stretching said web prior to said connecting said crotch member thereto.

15           27. The method of claim 15 wherein said crotch member comprises an elastic material.